

Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: April 16th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Holding a COVID-19 briefing. WATCH:



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good afternoon. Sorry to be a few minutes late, my fault. We have a lot of ground to cover today, and we have a video call with the White House after this so we're going to go as fast as we can, but as I said, there's a lot of ground to cover. Dan, tomorrow we are on for 1:00 p.m. and unless you all hear otherwise, on Saturday as well at 1:00 p.m. From here, in each case, we will do electronic notification as it relates to the overnight data and realities on Sunday, unless the group of us think it is meaningful to meet, even by telephone, in which case we'll let you know.

I'm joined today by the woman on my right who needs no introduction, the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli. To her right, a guy who's slowly creeping into that same category, also from the Department of Health Communicable Disease Service Medical Director, Dr. Ed Lifshitz, thank you both for being here. And to my left, a guy, another one who needs no introduction, the Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan.

We'll get right to the numbers, if we can. Today we are reporting an additional 4,391 positive cases, positive test results, rather, for a total of 75,317 New Jerseyans who have now tested positive. According to our online dashboard, again accessible through [covid19.nj.gov](https://covid19.nj.gov), as of 10:00 p.m. last evening, 8,224 residents were reported hospitalized, of whom 1,880 were listed in critical or intensive care, and 1,645 ventilators were in use. Forty-six patients are at one of our field medical stations. And between 10:00 p.m. Tuesday and 10:00 p.m. last night, happy to say 802 residents were discharged from our hospitals.

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As I announced yesterday, the daily reports from our three veterans homes have also now been added to the online dashboard. Judy will get into more color on all of the above. As we note every day, all of these numbers are just a snapshot in time, overnight changes or late reports may not yet be reflected in the posted data.

Sadly, with the heaviest of hearts, we also have the duty to report the loss of another 362 New Jerseyans, 362 blessed members of our state and our community, due to COVID-19 related complications. Our statewide toll now sits at 3,518. That is now officially more than the lives lost from fellow New Jerseyans in the First World War, in total. God bless their souls, each and every single one of them. Here are three stories of those we have lost recently.

First up, Michael Burke. Let's get Michael up there, God bless him. Look at that guy. Born in Paterson, but for the entirety of his life, he called nearby Little Falls home, and he devoted much of that life to his hometown. Mike was a volunteer firefighter, a 48-year member of the Singac Fire Company No. 3, and for 26 of those years, he served as the company's President. He also served for 14 years as President of Little Falls Fire Department. When he wasn't at the firehouse or out fighting fires, or tending to emergencies, his day job was as Vice President of Tri-Tec Design Inc. in Little Falls. To his son Tyler, with whom I spoke earlier and his fiancé Kathy, and the entire Little Falls community, Mayor James Damiano reached out as well. We are with you all in mourning Mike's passing and his blessed life.

We also lost Solomon David. There he is, God love him. By the way, lost at the tender age of 41. He was an EMT with Trinitas Regional Medical Center in Elizabeth for nine years. He also worked at St. Barnabas Medical Center as a hyperbaric safety officer in the wound care center. But his most important jobs were as husband to his wife Renee, and again I spoke to Renee earlier today, God bless her. And father to their children, Soul and Journey. Solomon was a basketball coach for the North Plainfield, Nothing But Nets organization. He was also a businessman, the owner of his own clothing company, Soulful Journey Brand, and it's hard not to see where he got that name. Helping people was his true calling and I know his family and community will miss that the most. May God bless him and each and every one of his family and friends.

Seventy-five years ago yesterday, on April 15, 1945, the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp was liberated by British forces. One of those freed that day was Margit Feldman. There she is. Margit passed away from COVID-19 complications on Tuesday, April 14. She was just about two months shy of her 91st birthday. She was born Margit Buchalter in Budapest, and grew up in a small town near the border with Czechoslovakia. When the Nazis came, she and her parents were sent to Auschwitz. Her parents were murdered there. But she lied about her age, telling the soldiers that she was 18 and not 15, making her eligible to serve forced labor. She would survive being sent to several camps, including one return trip to Auschwitz and a death march to Bergen-Belsen. She was still just 16 and a survivor at her liberation.

She would soon move to Sweden and came to the United States in 1947, upon discovering an aunt and uncle who had moved here. Margit would become an x-ray technician, and in 1953, married Harvey Feldman, with whom she would raise a family. Their son Joseph himself, by the way, a medical doctor working in East Orange, and I spoke to him earlier today, and daughter, Tina. She and Harvey would see their children marry and give them three grandchildren. Harvey, her husband, it should be noted, is currently in Morristown Medical Center, also with COVID-19. Please, everybody keep him in your prayers.

Margit was active in her synagogue and with the Jewish Federation of Somerset Hunterdon and Warren Counties, among other organizations. But Margit's legacy is best captured in her work to ensure that the world never forgets the horrors of the Holocaust. She would share her story of survival and liberation with tens of thousands of students across the state, and served as a founding member of both the New Jersey Holocaust Education Commission and the Holocaust and Genocide Institute at Raritan Valley Community College. For her, I recall the words of the great Elie Wiesel and I quote him, "Just as despair can come to one only from other human beings, hope, too, can be given to one only by other human beings." Margit gave us so much hope over her 90-plus years. She will be buried tomorrow, two days after the 75th anniversary of her liberation. May her memory be a blessing to her family and to us all.

Three remarkable lives of three remarkable New Jerseyans, each gave so much to their communities, and for every single one of them, those we have just lost and those we have lost over the past number of weeks, we take a moment to remember and we look to our flags flying at half-staff. This is the ultimate toll of COVID-19.

All of a sudden, social distancing doesn't seem so much of an inconvenience if it means that we don't have to keep mourning so many blessings souls. It remains the key to us flattening the curve, and eventually coming down the other side of it, to the point where we can responsibly begin the process of reopening our state.

I've been showing – Dan, help me out here. I've been showing this map every day. And I want us all to see it again. Our efforts, folks, are working. We're not home yet by any means, but our efforts are working. Over the past few weeks, we've taken a map that was once red and bright orange, and we're turning it lighter and lighter. And that's good news. That means that we're aggressively slowing the transmission of COVID-19. But if we let up even just a bit, we will risk seeing these colors rapidly turning to bright orange, and please God, not again to red. And again, the colors determine how fast the spread is doubling.

This is our challenge together. Our goals are twofold: to flatten the curve and bend it back down. We cannot have a spike. That would be potentially disastrous for our healthcare system and its workers. It would mean countless more deaths. 3,518 is already 3,518 too many, and we know we're going to lose more of our blessed residents. But how many more depends on you and we maintaining our practice of social distancing, of staying at home. Please continue to do just that. It is working, notwithstanding the loss of these blessed lives, it is working. And together, we will break the back of the curve, the virus, bring it down as far as we can, as close to zero and begin responsibly get back on our feet.

It is in this vein, that today I'm announcing that our public schools will remain closed through at least Friday, May 15, another four weeks. I made this decision in careful consultation with Judy and the Department of Health, as well as Dr. Repollet at the Department of Education, among other key stakeholders. Let me be perfectly clear. There's nobody who wants to open the schools more than I do. I'm a father of four kids, one of whom is in high school, and I want him to return to his regular classrooms. But I can't do that right now. But I remain hopeful we can. We cannot be guided by emotion. We need to be guided by where the facts on the ground, science, and public health take us. And that means it will not be saved to reopen our schools or start sports back up for at least another four weeks.

I know this is hard. It's hard on all of us. I've got a senior in college, his graduation ceremonies have been canceled. It's hard. But if we all keep pulling and working together, I hope that it will put me in a position, in a month's time, to make a different announcement. There is no doubt we are saving lives and we must maintain the course.

Now please allow me to switch gears to a couple of separate topics. I will first address the heavy news that came out last night regarding a long-term care facility in Sussex County. I am heartbroken by the tragic news that several individuals have lost their lives in a coronavirus outbreak at the Andover Sub-Acute and Rehabilitation Center 1 and 2. I pray for the health and recovery of the other residents and employees devastated by COVID-19.

I am also outraged that bodies of the dead were allowed to pile up in a makeshift morgue at the facility. New Jerseyans living in our long-term care facilities deserve to be cared for with respect, compassion, and dignity. We can and must do better. I've asked the Attorney General to look into this matter as well as to do a review of all long-term care facilities that have experienced a disproportionate number of deaths during the COVID outbreak, and I know he will take any and all appropriate action.

Our full focus must remain on mitigating the spread of the virus and minimizing the impact to all who remain, in this case, at the Andover facility, as well as all of our other long-term care facilities. Commissioner Persichilli, and she'll get into this, I'm sure, has also directed the Department of Health's Communicable Disease Service with Ed, in coordination with their team, in coordination with the local health department to enforce critical safety measures and protocols. A team has been deployed to assist the center, its staff and its residents. We know this is an issue that is not unique to New Jersey, it is national in scope. We know that there are bad actors in the industry across the country, but New Jersey can lead in how we respond to these issues.

Switching gears to another topic, I want to express publicly, as I do privately on a regular basis, my deepest gratitude to Governor Andrew Cuomo for the 100 ventilators that New York is sending to New Jersey to help with our efforts. New York and New Jersey have been partners throughout this emergency, and this partnership is focused on saving lives and working together to beat this virus. Neighbors look out for each other and to Governor Cuomo, again thank you, and we will return the favor.

Also today, I am announcing the my appointments of Dr. Rich Besser and Secretary Jeh Johnson to the multi-state board and council that I, along with our region's governors, have established to help lead and coordinate our efforts regarding the eventual reopening of our states and economies. Dr. Besser, on the left, currently serves as the President and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and is a former Acting Director of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Jeh Johnson served as the Secretary of the United States, Secretary of Homeland Security under President Barack Obama. They will join, as I've mentioned, Chief of Staff George Helmy as our three representatives on the Regional Council. I thank them for their leadership.

You know, we are blessed to have two folks like this in New Jersey to begin with, already in positions of authority in both the foundation and philanthropic world, as well as in the private sector. We're further blessed by their willingness to step up and serve. I've spoken to each of them over the past couple of days, there wasn't a moment of hesitation in either their reactions to our offer and our asking of them to help out. They will make a difference, along with George and the other representatives from other states, they will make a real difference.

And again, folks, there's sort of three rings of responsibility here. Number one, first and foremost, our responsibility, the 9 million residents in New Jersey. That's job number one. The second ring out is coordination, exchanging of best ideas, harmonization with our regional neighbors. And then finally, it is a continuation of a strong cooperation with the federal government and the Trump administration, clearly working with Members of Congress and leadership there. It is all of the above. It's not one versus the other. It's not one instead of the other, it's all of the above. We could not have two better professionals, two better New Jerseyans standing up on our regard, than Rich Besser and Jeh Johnson, so again, I thank them.

Next, today I am pleased to announce that the Board of the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Financing Authority has unanimously voted to suspend all rent increases at eligible properties within its entire portfolio. That's some 36,000 rental units across the state. This action specifically benefits thousands of low and moderate income families who have been among those most economically impacted by this emergency. I applaud the board for its action, and I also urge any resident whose ability to pay rent has been impacted due to the loss of a job to visit [covid19.nj.gov](https://www.covid19.nj.gov) and simply search for rent relief to be connected to available programs at the Department of Community Affairs. Again, I want to give Sheila Oliver our Lieutenant Governor, who oversees the Department of Community Affairs and her team, a big shout out.

Also this morning, the Department of Labor announced that the number of new unemployment claims over the past week has decreased, mercifully, by roughly one-third from the week before, but we still have a record 429,000 residents currently receiving unemployment benefits, and the number will continue to rise as new claims continue to be processed. As I announced a couple of days ago, the department has taken steps to significantly increase its capacity to review and approve unemployment claims. I reiterate that regardless of when your claim is processed, no one will lose one penny of the benefits they deserve, including the additional \$600 per week provided under the federal CARES Act.

To those of you trying to connect on the phone, we continue to ask for your patience as even with the expanded phone operations, there are still wait times given the overall volume of calls. If you have lost your job and can still work, please visit the jobs portal, again available at [covid19.nj.gov](https://www.covid19.nj.gov). There you will find literally tens of thousands of jobs at hundreds of essential employers across the state and across an array of industries. And a reminder that anyone who was left their job voluntarily or who refuses to work at their currently available job is not eligible for unemployment.

If I may switch gears again onto the subject of testing, of our to FEMA partner testing sites, Bergen Community College will be open tomorrow, April 17, at 8:00 a.m. for a maximum of 500 tests. PNC Bank Art Center will reopen Saturday, April 18, exclusively for symptomatic first responders and healthcare workers. The PNC Bank Art Center site will reopen for the public at 8:00 a.m. on Monday, April 20 for 500 tests and as I've noted, we have had days where the 500 test maximum has not been reached. So if you are symptomatic and qualify for a test, make Holmdel your first stop. There are now two dozen publicly accessible testing sites across the state that are open to residents of specific counties and which are listed on our information hub at [covid19.nj.gov/testing](https://www.covid19.nj.gov/testing). Additionally, there are roughly 40 more privately run sites that your primary care practitioner could send you if you meet the requirements for testing. As I've said for the past couple of days, it's at least 66 sites in total.

And as I have noted, we recognize that significantly expanding testing is critical and necessary for us as we move forward. I continue to press this case in my conversations with the White House and our other federal partners, both on my own and alongside all of our governors. Each state is experiencing a shortage of tests. This isn't unique to New Jersey; in fact, we're punching well above our weight. But if you're waiting for a test, and you're in your car, and you're frustrated, I don't blame you. We need to get more testing materials to New Jersey. But I'm committed, I will tell you, to continuing to get us the testing supplies and innovations that we need.

Speaking of getting all that we need, last week we opened a volunteer portal for those with experience in computer programming and other technological areas. We have been overwhelmed by the response with more than 2,800 people stepping forward. I'm happy to say this is one area where we now have more volunteers than we need. Our team is currently going through the list of all of you, and each of you who have provided your information, and you will be informed, I hope sooner than later, if there is a match.

Next, I want to acknowledge one of our state's corporate leaders that are stepping up despite facing their own unique challenges. Wakefern Foods operates ShopRite stores across North Jersey and Central Jersey, and in eight other states. They have emerged as a central player on the frontlines of our work to keep our state running, despite issues of supply and demand and their effort to keep their workforce safe. But in the face of all this, they aren't forgetting those in need and recently announced a \$1 million donation to support the food banks in the communities it serves. Thank you Wakefern Foods for your partnership and support of our residents.

And this is a good transition to highlight, as I always say every day, good news stories that come across our state and today, we've got one in particular that I want to get to. I want to give a huge shout out to two nurses. Let's get them up there. There they are. RWJ. Barnabas Community Health Center in Toms River, here are ICU nurse Christine Warren, on the left, signaling a touchdown apparently, and emergency department nurse Mary Ellen Jackubowski on the right. They both had contracted COVID-19. Both were treated at Community Medical Center and last Friday, they both were discharged after defeating the virus. Here they are after being clapped out of the hospital by their colleagues, God bless them.

If you get a chance to see the video of this moment, it is nothing short of emotional. It does violate social distancing. I have to remember, Judy will kill me if I don't say the fact that just because we're wearing masks as we all do now, we're only taking these off so you can understand us, that does not trump social distancing. Social distancing, saying six feet away trumps all, but it is still emotional nonetheless. Both Christine and Mary Ellen put human faces to the fact that our frontline health professionals are heroes. They are selflessly putting their own safety at risk to serve others. We wish them all the best and we will never forget.

At every RWJ Barnabas Hospital, at St. Claire's in Denville and at St. Peter's in New Brunswick, whenever someone defeats COVID-19 and is discharged, they play the Beatles Here Comes the Sun over the PA system, to alert everyone that another victory has been won. I'm reminded of the line in that song, "The smiles returning to the faces." We will all get there. Each and every single one of us is equally essential in flattening the curve and getting ourselves to the point where we can responsibly begin to reopen our state. Keep up with your social distancing, please stay at home. Keep wearing your face coverings, even though it may be a nuisance, and even if you think you look silly. Trust me, you don't. And you'll look far sillier if you have to trade in a face covering for a hospital gown.

We will get through this unequivocally, not without cost. Look at the lives, the thousands now, of lives we've lost. But we will, New Jersey, get through this together as one extraordinary family, stronger than ever before. The sun is coming, I promise you. With that, I'll turn things over to the person who needs no introduction, please help me welcome the Commissioner of the Department of Health, Judy Persichilli.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. In my daily reports, I usually provide you with information on the health impacts of COVID-19. However, we cannot overlook the mental health impacts this pandemic is having on all of us. The disruption of our daily routines can cause stress and the economic realities of being out of work can be overwhelming. Social separation is key to fighting this virus, but it also is keeping us from the direct contact and support of those we depend on.

We are dealing with new stressors in our everyday lives. Being in our homes alone, perhaps, for extended periods of time, or having to balance working from home with helping children with their home schooling. Or, worrying about potential exposure as you do your work as an essential employee. These are certainly extraordinary times, and they come with novel new worries and anxieties. So to help New Jerseyans in managing these stressors, I want to remind you that our colleagues at the Department of Human Services launched the New Jersey Mental Health Care's hotline at 866-202-HELP, or 866-202-4357. Specialists are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., seven days a week. It's an opportunity to have a safe space to talk and get support and care in these challenging times. We encourage you to reach out.

Human Services has also partnered with Access of St. Joseph's Health in Paterson to create a free support helpline for individuals who are hearing impaired. Individuals can call 973-870-0677 Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In addition, in response to the Governor's directive, Human Services, Banking and Insurance, and the Department of Health have worked to promote access to mental healthcare during these difficult times, including increasing tele-mental health. Medicaid, in particular, has taken unprecedented steps to make tele-mental health easier to access and easier for healthcare providers to offer. We are working across the New Jersey government to connect residents to coverage. Folks in need of health coverage should visit, [getcovered.nj.gov](https://getcovered.nj.gov) to learn more about the marketplace and Medicaid coverage. We believe that coverage means not just coverage for physical health, but coverage for physical and mental health, and also substance use disorders. As always, those struggling with substance use disorder should call Human Services free 24-hour hotline at 844-REACHNJ to connect to treatment. On behalf of our colleagues at Human Services and myself, a special thank you to the mental health and substance use disorder counselors, therapists and peers and others who are making sure this care is available.

During these times, it's important for everyone to practice self-care. Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories, including social media. Connect with families and friends through video chat or by phone. Try to stick to a routine as much as possible. Exercise, eat healthy meals, try to get some sleep. If you're able to, continue working from home. A recent study has shown that adults that continued to work reported better mental and physical health than those who stopped working. Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row. While we fight hard to protect your physical health, let's be sure to focus just as intently on our mental health and mental wellbeing.

Last evening, our hospitals reported 8,224 hospitalizations, with individuals having COVID-19 and those under investigation. The daily growth rate was flat. Since March 31, as reported, we've discharged over 8,000 individuals. There are now 2,014 individuals in critical care; 1,645 of those individuals are on ventilators. That's 82% of our intensive care patients are on ventilators. You may recall a number of days ago that was as high as 97%. There are 379 long-term care facilities and assisted living facilities now reporting at least one COVID-19 in their facilities for over 8,000 and 2,009 cases being reported in our long-term care facilities. As I reported, these facilities are taking care of our most vulnerable populations and they are particularly at risk for COVID-19 complications. That's why the department has been focused on these facilities. Since March 6, we've issued 18 orders and guidances.

I'd like to give you a little more information about the Andover facility. The Andover facility is the largest long-term care facility in the state. They're licensed for 514 long-term care beds in one building, and 159 in another building. As of the 15<sup>th</sup>, the census was 120 in Andover 1 and 419 in Andover 2.

Last Saturday, we were notified that the facility was in need of body bags for deceased residents, and it was also reported that there were 28 bodies being stored in that facility. We immediately notified the local health department and the public health nurse, and the local health officer visited that facility at 2:00 a.m. Sunday morning. You may recall, I shared a number of days ago that we had sent out a team. They surveyed the facility and reported back that there was appropriate staffing and PPE at that time. Additionally, they reported that they observed five bodies on site, and the staff reported to them that three bodies had been released earlier in the day. At that point, we required the facility to report daily to the local health department. We also sent them additional PPE and the names of individuals that they could call up if they needed additional staffing. The facility was required to institute their backup plan for storage of deceased at the local hospital.

On the 14<sup>th</sup>, we received another complaint that more bodies were being stored. At 3:00 p.m. on the 14<sup>th</sup>, the local health department surveyed the facility and reported that they were short on staffing, and we additionally called up the owner of the facility and notified him of our concerns and required him to report

back to us. We will be sending survey staff out to monitor the activities of this facility on a regular basis.

This morning, the owner of the facility reported to me that the current staffing is solid with 12 nurses, normal is 11, and 39 CNAs, their normal is 40. Additional administrative personnel are now on site and they have provided for additional wages to be paid for CNAs to incent them to work at the facility. The Census today is 420 of 543.

We're not pleased with what is going on at the Andover facility and I'll give you a full report of their statistics. Nineteen residents have been reported as positive for COVID-19, two are hospitalized; 34 residents have been identified as having flu-like symptoms. There have been seven total deaths since April 3. Five of the deaths have been due to COVID-19. They also report four staff members with flu-like symptoms. Andover 2 has a census of 419. They report 84 residents with COVID-19 positive. An additional 99 are showing respiratory symptoms, 48 staff are reporting flu-like symptoms. There have been 28 deaths since March 30. Fourteen of those deaths have been due to COVID-19.

We continue to work with all of the local health officials who are monitoring long-term care facilities that have COVID-19 cases and our department's communicable disease experts provide support to those local health departments as they respond to these outbreaks.

As the Governor reported, today we are reporting 4,391 new cases for a total of 75,317 cases in our state. Sadly, we are reporting 362 new deaths, of which 54 were residents of long-term care facilities. We now have a total of 3,518 deaths in the state. Of the deaths that we have information on, 43% are female, 57% are male; 51.1% are white, non-Hispanic; 22.5% are black, non-Hispanic; 15.5% are Hispanic; 5.5%, Asian; and 5.4% are identified as other. We continue to see the underlying conditions of cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, other chronic diseases, other lung diseases and renal disease, along with neurological disability and cancer as the leading causes of comorbid complications.

According to the data from this morning, the seven laboratories sending us COVID-19 results report that 138,609 individuals have been tested, 62,096 have returned positive with a holding positivity rate of 44.8%. Again, in closing, I remind everyone to take steps to protect their mental health throughout this outbreak. This is a difficult time for all of us. Be patient and be kind to one another and stay connected. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, thank you. A couple of quick follow-up items just to say, as we normally do, the top six counties continue to be the ones that we've been reporting on: Bergen followed by Hudson, Essex Union, Passaic and Middlesex in terms of number of cases. Secondly, the African American number continues to be a particular concern for us in terms of it continues to be 50-plus percent higher than the representation overall in the African American community in the state and that's something we continue to be very focused on.

I've not yet acknowledged but want to acknowledge Jared Maples, the Director of the Department of Homeland Security Preparedness and Deputy Counsel Parimal Garg who are with us today. Thank you. Also, I meant to say earlier, we had a leadership meeting this morning to sort of update as best we can. And this is very general terms on particularly some of the financial implications of this crisis on the state, both revenues, expenses, status of federal monies, etc., with the Senate President, the Speaker and their respective majority leaders and budget chairs.

I also had a conversation just before coming in, which is partly why I'm a couple minutes late with Minority Leader Chuck Schumer. He and I and his office and mine are in constant discussions and again, repeating the plea that I've made many times from this table. While the CARES Act was a very good step in the right direction, we need a lot more direct federal cash assistance into states, and I'll raise my hand, specifically in New Jersey. The National Governors Association has put forth an ask of \$500 billion. I've said to you before that I won't speak for the other Governors, but our assessment was a few weeks ago that New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Connecticut needed \$100 billion. We put that in a letter, the four Governors. I think that number, if anything, is closer to \$150 billion direct cash assistance. There's just no way around that.

We can't continue to be at the front lines, serving those who have healthcare, if not life and death challenges, folks who have lost their jobs, small businesses, hospital systems, transit systems and the like, unless we get the federal money to back and fill our efforts. Just to reiterate that with that. With that, with an update on

compliance, PPE, other matters, please help me welcome another indispensable figure in this fight, Colonel Patrick Callahan.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Thank you, Governor. Good afternoon. Very briefly with regards to the overnight compliance, in Mount Olive, up in Morris County, a subject was cited for violation of a temporary restraining order and the EO violation was subsequently lodged in the Morris County Jail. Newark Police Department issued 72 EO violations summonses and closed one business. In Washington Township, Warren County, two individuals were cited for maintaining a public nuisance, and also cited for the EO violations. In Mount Ephraim, as a result of an overturned vehicle in a motor vehicle accident, that subject was charged with an EO violation. In Atlantic City, police responded to the call of a shoplifter at a CVS and in processing that subject. He coughed on officers claiming that he had the coronavirus. In Pennsauken, police responded to an alarm at a Foreman Mills location where inside they did locate the subject who had allegedly broken into that facility. He was charged with multiple charges associated with the burglary as well as the EO violation. In Cherry Hill, police responded to the report that the employees there preparing food were not wearing the face coverings as mandated in the EO, and they were cited for not having the coverings on. In Jersey City. After three days in a row of offering warnings at a supermarket, police cited two individuals who worked there for failure to wear the proper face coverings. That was in Union City, excuse me. In Jersey City, it was a subject that was being arrested, had a harassment charge and started coughing on the officers saying "If I'm going to die, you're going to die with me." And that's it.

And with regard to PEE, that is an hourly effort, Governor, whether it's ventilators, gowns seem to have risen to the top of the list now, masks. I was happy to come home last night to find approximately 200 R-95 masks on my front porch from a neighbor who's in construction, so that level of donation and dedication is appreciated. I thank my neighbor George for that. That's all, Governor.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Here's to your neighbor George. We've got to get his picture up here at some point. Hold that thought. Thank you, Pat, and again to the members of the Knucklehead Hall of Shame, it just is beyond comprehension why people would do that, but they apparently continue to do that. And it's one thing to not have a face covering, although that's inexcusable, but it's another thing to proactively and aggressively try to infect somebody else, which is completely unacceptable. Again, everybody watching, everybody out there, the overwhelming amount of you all, and all of us, are doing the right thing and rowing the boat together and doing the things that we need to do. That map wouldn't look as it looks earlier without the extraordinary efforts.

Again, on the school front, I've said at least until May 15. I would be the happiest guy in New Jersey, maybe America, if not the planet, to be able to have a very different message then. I've gotten a lot of incomings from parents of kids who are particularly sports oriented, not surprisingly, of seniors in high school, whether it's related to sports, academics, seeing their friends, graduation ceremonies. I have nothing but complete sympathy. Please know that we're not in any way, shape or form trying to be Doctor No here. Nothing would give me more joy than to be able to say, we're ready to go but we're just not there. If we all continue to stay the course for the next four weeks, I guess May 15 is four weeks from tomorrow, we may well have a different message at that point. It's up to all of us to stay at it. Please God, stay at it, stay home, stay away from each other. Let's hope for better news.

With that, we're going to sweep across once and only once. John, we'll begin with you. John, I noticed that you're moving your chair every day, I may shift up where we start the sweep. I'm only doing this for Dave, only because – no, that's not true.

Q&A Session

**John McAlpin, Bergen Record:** Two quick questions on the schools. The order, does it again include private and non-public schools? The May 15 date, does that telegraph anything about the rest of the state opening up at that time, or the possibility that'd be the date?

On long-term care, was Andover 1, were you receiving complaints about Andover not notifying families of illnesses or death? Any complaints generally about Andover in the recent weeks since the COVID-19 breakout? What other long-term care facilities have you visited? Can you tell us what actions were done

there? Any specifics you can tell us about these places? And can you define in the order of the investigation, what's a disproportionate number of COVID deaths at a long-term care facility? Would say 33 out of 100 be disproportionate? Which is reported at one care facility we're hearing about now.

There's a lot of reports of refrigerated trucks being used to store bodies. Can you tell us what specific regulations, what rules are in place to handle bodies in refrigerated trucks? What supervision is being done for that?

Governor, we asked before about naming these places. You said you wouldn't because of privacy and that's clearly the Andover one. At what point will you name these places to let people know what is going on in these, where dozens of people are dying, they're disposing bodies in parking lots. Will you name these so people can know what's happening to their parents and loved ones?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Let me start, Judy, turn to you. Pat, we may want you to come in on refrigerated trucks. It is, Parimal, all schools, number one, that's the most important thing. And secondly, May 15, I wouldn't read a whole lot into it. We're trying to balance a lot of different plates in the air, as you can imagine. First and foremost, input from the woman to my right and to the guy to her right in terms of the health inputs and the data related to health, most importantly.

Four weeks from tomorrow, to us, feels like we can get to sort of a halfway, if you will. Again, it's at least to May 15. It's a window that we collectively, along with the Commissioner of the Department of Education feel is a comfortable enough window for us to be able to get one more shot to reassess, at least one more shot, but to reassess.

I'm just going to make one general comment. You can imagine the reaction I had, or any of us had, when the story had come to light on this Sub-Acute Rehabilitation Centers. I mean, this is just completely beyond the pale. It's not just -- unfortunately, I wish it was just saying, you know, that this was a narrow issue. This is a national challenge for us right now, but completely unacceptable. I'm going to ask Judy to come in on the specific questions to Andover and the broader long-term care facilities, and then Pat, you may want to come back in after that as it relates to the refrigerated trucks question. Judy?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Yeah, I would like to share with you an excerpt from the investigation that was done at Andover. It gives you an indication of how organizations, facilities, are trying to comply. A table within the lobby had instructions for all staff, take their temperature and complete a screening questionnaire. A notice was displayed at the main entrance. The notice provided current statistics of positive COVID-19 staff and residents within the facility. Information regarding quarantine of residents and assignment of staff was provided by the charge nurse and the medical assistant. That gives you an idea of how they're complying and how we check on what's going on.

We rely on the local health officers for to visit facilities when we get lower-level complaints. If we get immediate jeopardy complaints, our survey team goes out or CMS goes out, the federal surveyors. I cannot tell you how many have been visited. I do know that we have not received what we would call IJ complaints during this particular pandemic. That does not mean that there are not immediate jeopardy issues. It means that we have not received the complaints. I'll let Pat talk about the refrigerated trucks because we have ordered them through the medical examiner.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Before Pat answers, I didn't answer your question. I'm going to leave it to the Attorney General on the question of disproportionate, but the numbers you cited, John, certainly personal litmus test would certainly pass that bar. Thank you, and Parimal, you'll follow up with the Attorney General. Pat.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Yes, we do have, and have in every disaster, have a Mortuary Affairs or mass casualty component built in, John. We did, I think we even announced it a few weeks ago. We had ordered 20 several weeks ago, refrigerated trailers. Of those, three have arrived. I think actually a fourth one arrived yesterday. Expecting three more for up in North Jersey, so whether they're the trailers that we've gotten through the FEMA process that we've contracted with. We also have located a fixed location in Central Jersey which will serve as temporary storage for decedents.

The process, whether a hospital has their own trailer or they're using the ones that have come over the past week or so, what we're trying to really hammer out is the process of allowing funeral directors to take decedents directly to this fixed location, which I think is going to help take the strain off of the system. I'm on the phone daily with Dr. Falzon, I was on with the Attorney General this morning. So right now we're just trying to nail down the processes to make sure that, one, that they're above all, respected and cared for. And two, that they're properly tracked in a respectful manner so when we get to the other side of this, that we can release those bodies back to the family members for proper tributes.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Pat, thank you. Just real quick, but I don't want to leave any stones unturned. Judy's addressed the privacy versus notification question in the past, but I'd love you to just, Judy, on the heels of this incident in particular, to hit that again, if you could.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Sure. I mean, we've gotten that question a lot, and for all the right reasons. You know, we release information when it enhances and promotes the public health mission. On the specific nursing homes now, I think what I can tell you is that it's every nursing home in the state, and we rely on them and we put out guidance on March 6, and again on April 4, that they are to advise the residents, their employees and the relatives or loved ones of the residents of the outbreaks in their facilities. We are getting input that that's occurring. If it is not occurring, I encourage the residents or their loved ones to call our hotline, and we will follow up.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Call the hotline, go on the website that you see behind us, let us know. You should know that we're pounding away to remind folks of the directive. It is their obligation, to these operators to let folks know, both their patients, residents rather, employees, loved ones. A story like this shakes you to the bones. We don't bring the Attorney General in by happenstance, either. Thank you, Judy, for that. Dave.

**Dave Schatz, New Brunswick Today:** I know that you guys give us the total hospitalization number every day. But do we have the daily hospital admission rate every day? It would seem that if we did, it would tell us how many new people are actually going to the hospital because just giving us the hospital number, we don't know if they're there for a day, a week, a month. That might be a better way and indicator in terms of how this whole COVID-19 is unfolding and progressing. Do we also keep track of ER visits in any statistical way? And is that included in the numbers that you give us for hospitalizations?

The other thing here, the other question would be, you had mentioned, Commissioner, the importance of mental health. If you could just sort of flesh out, and perhaps Governor, you as well, how big of a concern is this? We've all been at home for several weeks now and people are starting to really go stir crazy, and understandably so. How big of an issue is this? What kind of a stigma may people be facing in terms of feeling embarrassed to ask for help, that they've never had a mental health issue before? I guess that's it.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, may I start and then jump in? Is that okay? I think the admissions rate, tell me, is it not mathematical? Because we have hospitalizations and folks who have left the system. I know you speak to it qualitatively, but I believe this is math, and if we have the math, I'll defer to the boss here to my right as to whether or not it makes sense to put those up. But Judy, you'll come back on that.

Mental health, and again, Judy started with this today, not by accident. This is something that we've spoken to and is a concern. I was asked last night about liquor stores and the fact of the matter of addiction and dependency is a reality. I think I said this, I can't recall 10 days or two weeks ago, that there's an extraordinary thing happening that is still happening.

Overwhelmingly, and there's an extraordinary irony to this, that as we isolate ourselves, as we stay away from each other, there is a coming together. We're all in this to win this war, sort of spirit and you can see the map reflecting that. It's a very sort of, against expectation, all for one, all in this together. That's the overwhelming reality. But we've also said that that's not everybody. Folks who suffer from mental health challenges, depression, addictions, other suicidal tendencies, that some folks clearly get left behind by this. The longer the clock, as a non-medical expert, the longer the clock, the bigger the concern as it relates to that. Therefore, it's no coincidence that Judy started her remarks today focused on mental health because it's something that she, along with Carol Johnson and our Department of Human Services, all of us are very focused on. That's why we've stood up hotlines. That's why we've got unusual outreaches as it relates to this.

Judy, on both the numbers in terms of the admissions and ER, I actually don't know the answer myself to the ER question, but also any more color on the mental health piece?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Sure. Well, you know, first on the mental health piece, you point out really correctly that everybody can do something for two weeks. When it gets to be four weeks or six weeks, things do get a little stressful. I'm struck by the Commissioner of Children and Families, and the issues with children who are at risk at home. The fact that there was less reporting because they're not in school, they're not with teachers and coaches, and I think that was really very telling, the things that could be happening because of the possibility of being too close together in a home.

So, yeah, we have to focus on mental health. We have to focus on everyone's wellbeing. Even the most stable person can be stressed out at this point in time, so it is a big focus. Human Services is doing a great job in that regard. I can probably report at a later date some of the statistics from hits on the hotline, and I'd be happy to do that.

Total admissions, you know, we've been so focused on admissions of individuals with COVID-19 or persons under investigation, I have not collected in our dashboard the total admissions, but we could probably do that as well, and report that at a future time.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Would that be helpful?

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Well, it would be helpful. I'm an old hospital person, it'd be helpful for me to understand how many heart attacks are we having? Not everyone is coming to the hospital because they have COVID-19. The hospitals are also taking care of whole other emergencies and I think we're at this point now where we have to start looking at both, for sure. I think, I don't want to speak out of turn, things are flattening a bit. That's what I'm hearing from the CEOs, things are a little bit calmer. So now we have to look at, how are we taking care of all of the residents of New Jersey for the things that they come to a hospital for.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Two things if I could add to that, and there's no question there's flattening. Today's got a little bit of a spike in the positive test results, but if you've fit a curve through those results over the past, now almost two weeks, you've got a pretty clear sense it's flattening. I'm getting the same. You do it with rigor, I get anecdotal evidence from the Holy Names or the Hackensack HUMC, etc. But I also want to remind everyone of the human behavioral point, right? This is still within our hands. And if we go off the wagon, not to use that phrase lightly, but if we let our hair down right now, we could blow all the progress we've made. We just cannot do that, which is why staying at home means so much.

The other comment I'd make, Dave, before we go to Ian here, is that we've acknowledged both births and deaths over the past couple of weeks. Births obviously are blessed developments. A couple of deaths, at a minimum, we've acknowledged had nothing to do with COVID-19. As Judy has reminded us, as has Ed and Christina, life goes on in these healthcare systems, Alpha and Omega both. Thank you. Ian.

**Ian Elliott, NJTV News:** Governor, do we know what the backlog looks like for getting test results now? Today there ended up being no wait by midday at the Bergen testing site. Does that show us anything? Do you have any reaction to that?

The EDA's loan and grant programs to help small businesses were oversubscribed, and now the federal SBA loan program is out of money. Will the state allocate more money for additional EDA programs? How many NJ businesses are still in need of funding and can't get it?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Backlog, I don't know. There were 66 different locations in the testing. The back end facilities that are doing the testing are a variety at this point, so there's no one answer, I don't think, is there? Judy or Ed?

**DOH Medical Director, Communicable Disease Service Dr. Ed Lifshitz:** No absolute answer to exactly what the backlog is. We are hearing anecdotally that it's getting better. We do look a little bit at overall turnaround time for these tests in the state, and we are seeing an overall turnaround time that's looking to be about three days or so. We do think it's getting better than it has been in the past, but we can't exactly quantify that.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I noticed the same as you noticed at the Bergen Community College site and in fact, we put out on social media today, this is the first time that's happened, that there was capacity still. As opposed to some, I did some network television interviews over the past week where the lines were, you know, around the barn and then some. I hope that's a good sign, too early to tell. We had mentioned that Holmdel had a series of days where they were not hitting capacity, so I hope this is a glimmer of hope. It would be really good if it were.

On the EDA front, if we had more money, we'd be putting it into more programs, trust me. The bank is running dry here and that's part of the reason why we had the leadership meeting that we had today. We have dire needs and we're not alone, by the way. Every American state is going through this, but we are one of the hardest hit right now. But part of the reason I was on the phone with Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, in addition to talking about direct state aid, we also talked about federal help for small businesses. There's a huge cry and you've seen the debate going on. It's looks like it's partisan. At the moment, I hope we can break through that.

It's not either/or, right? Individuals need help, small businesses need help, states need help. We hope we can get to a good place and all the above. Nothing new to report on our end. How many? I think it's a high percentage of the folks who stood up and asked. Dan Bryan, we can come back from Tim Sullivan, how many are getting grants versus how many wanted them and didn't get them. Is that fair? Thank you. Sir, how are you?

**Phil Andrews, NJ News Network:** Good afternoon, Governor. Phil Andrews from New Jersey News Network. I have two quick questions. The first question is, there's currently a grassroots social media movement to create a March on Trenton protest, to protest some of the orders that you have put in place during COVID-19.

The second question is, could you reiterate why the need to raise the parkway and turnpike prices during the current situation?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** On the former, I hadn't heard it, but I saw that that play out in Michigan, I think yesterday, at the State Capitol. I would just say to folks, from the bottom of my heart, we are making decisions as best we can based on fact, data, science. We don't do things sort of cavalierly. Do we always get it right? I'm sure we don't always get it right. We're trying like heck. In fact we've tweaked things. We tweaked gun shops, as an example. We tweak things based for different reasons, sometimes, but we are not too proud to come back and reassess decisions that we've made.

I would just say to folks, this virus spreads when we let our guard down. There's just no question about it. That won't be a forever and always. We're in a moment in time. And please, God, we get through this moment in time sooner than later. And the way we get through it is we stay home and we stay away from each other. I would just plead with those folks. This is not partisan. It isn't some ideological bent. In fact, I was on Fox News last night, for me playing an away game, but frankly for a reason. We're all in this together. We all live in New Jersey, that's our first port of call. We're New Jerseyans, we're Americans, that's the way we've got to approach this, extraordinary bipartisan cooperation. I've been texted by at least two of the Republican legislators as I've been sitting here, to each of their credit, staying strong and I will never forget that spirit of, we're all in this together.

All I've said on these hearings is that if they take place, they better darn well acknowledge, this is related to tolls, they better well acknowledge the environment in which we're in. They can't congregate. They've got to do these by some virtual means. They've got to do them with an extended comment period. We've got to provide, I think it was South Jersey in particular, I mentioned the point. You've got to have an 800-number with a human on the other end who's prepared to take the calls.

Beyond that, I've said this, that I feel strongly that transportation-related money needs to be the direct source wherever possible for transportation projects. And that we're going to wake up from this at some point, please God, sooner than later. We have a state that we're going to need to make sure is standing and is there for us in a year, three years, five years, 10 or 20 years. That's a reality. That's why construction, as example, although we've tweaked that, that's another example where we treat non-essential construction, construction as a general matter for a rest area, for a big highway project, that's going on. Because New Jersey will go on,

notwithstanding the loss of life, the extraordinary inconvenience, this extraordinary once-in-a-century, if not once-in-a-forever moment, New Jersey will continue to exist, thank God. We will go forward and we're going to need to continue to keep that in the long term back of our minds. Thank you. Sir.

**Reporter:** Last night in a council meeting, the Jackson Township Council President suggested that you should send the National Guard to towns that were not complying with Executive Orders and suggested social distancing guidelines. Have you heard from them and are you considering that?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I have not heard from Jackson personally. It is quite possible our intra-governmental affairs team, which has been run with exceptional leadership by Mike DeLamater during this crisis, it's possible he has heard from them. And if he has, Dan Bryan, you'll make sure we come back and tell you that. I don't know, Pat Callahan, that we have felt we have needed to pull the National Guard in between local county enforcement as well as the state police, which has been so aggressive on enforcement, but I turn to you to opine.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** The only thing that I would note is that if you remember when the first Executive Orders were issued, a lot of the overnight reporting was about large crowd gatherings. Personally and professionally, looking at that every day, it's almost these one-offers, the shoplifter coughing on an officer. So we're not really seeing, here and there a store open that has X amount of people in it, but we're not seeing the large gatherings. I would say at this time, to the Governor's point, between local, county and state resources in law enforcement that we would not need the National Guard to perform that role.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I would say this. That's something that's on the table and we reserve the right, but we haven't had to. Is that fair, Pat? Yeah. Are you good sir, in the back? Elise, good afternoon.

**Elise Young, Bloomberg:** Good afternoon. Bloomberg reported on draft legislation to borrow for the current fiscal year and the next. What was the reaction from lawmakers during your meeting today? How do you tap the markets without risking more downgrades? Finally, if the borrowing plan doesn't happen, what's the alternative?

And I have a question from Daniel Munoz of NJ Biz. Regarding Trump's potential announcement to reopen state economies, do you believe that could backfire and could lead to people from less strict states coming to New Jersey?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Say the middle of that again, sorry, Elise?

**Elise Young, Bloomberg:** Do you believe Trump's potential announcement to reopen state economies could backfire and could lead to people from less strict states coming to New Jersey?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Got it. The Federal Reserve, on the first set of questions, Elise, the Federal Reserve stated, I believe last Thursday, that they would, in an unusual step, that they would entertain buying municipal bonds for a duration of up to two years, and I think for a total of \$500 billion in a program, and each state would be assessed. I think it's a 20% cap. The maximum amount any state could raise would be a 20% of revenue cap. When you do the math for New Jersey that comes out, I think, to about \$9 billion, potentially.

We had a good discussion. This is something that we feel, I feel personally pretty strongly we need to have as a tool in our toolkit, particularly with uncertainty at the Congressional or national level. I don't see any other way around it. And again, I'm not calling shots for any popularity contests. How that impacts, and we don't take any of this lightly, whether it's credit ratings or other realities we take very seriously but the fact of the matter is, we are going to have serious cash flow challenges.

And then beyond cash flow, we will have serious programmatic challenges, including allowing local municipalities to, I mean, this is going to be real stuff if we don't find the right sources of money. If I thought with a high degree of certainty that the federal government through Congressional action, through bills that the President would sign, if I thought there was a high degree of certainty that that money would come in that way, that would be less of a need. This is, to me, an essential tool to have in the toolkit because even if the federal government does come through with money, we would make certain that this is an instrument that does not pay a penalty if you prepay it. If we get a better result than we think, we can just pay the debt down immediately.

And so if you say, what happens if we don't have that as an option and we don't get the federal money? Folks should assume we're going to have to cut programs, and that will affect everybody in this entire state. There's just no other way around it. I hope it doesn't come to that. I think it's a much more prudent, it's a much more reasonable step to take for us if we want to both address our cash flow challenges, as well as keep our best public schools in the country, keep our full ranks of first responders. All of the services, all of that would be in jeopardy if we don't find the capital. I'll answer Daniel's and then I know you have a follow up.

To Daniel's question, it could backfire, absolutely. The sequencing of events, and part of this is going to be defer to the experts to my right, the sequence of events, and we're trying to wargame for this right now. Let's remember the house is still on fire. The curve may be flattening, but we had over 4,000 more positive tests come in that we announced earlier today. The curve may be flattening, but we're still going up, not coming down. Job number one is to break the back of the curve, flatten it as much as possible. Please continue to stay home and adhere to social distancing.

Then we need to make sure, and this will be, I'm sure, a subject of discussion with the President and Vice President this afternoon. It certainly is in our team and with our regional partners. We need robust healthcare infrastructure in place, including especially the ability to mass test and get quick turnaround. Fair to say, both Judy and Ed, right? We need to have that. The reason we need to have that is so that we can address exactly what Daniel is talking about. Where are the hotspots? Maybe someone who came in from a lower common denominator state, or a state that got to this later than we did. Inadvertently, even asymptomatic, let's be able to identify those hotspots, have a robust contact tracing infrastructure in place, a plan to quarantine and self-isolate, that allows us, to give us the confidence, I think it's fair to say, that we can begin to open back up again. Without running the risk of something coming in through the back door with the equivalent of throwing gasoline on the fire, and going right back through the hell, again, that we're going through now and that I'm determined that we won't go through again.

That, I think, is the order of events. And maybe, again, I'm way above my pay grade now. Then, once you're back up on your feet for a little bit, maybe that's enough time for the some therapeutics to have been developed that folks talk about. Not one that is usually treated for something over here that we'll try over here, but something that's specific to COVID-19, and then maybe even more so, that's a bridge to ultimately a vaccine that again, the experts to my right can opine whether or not this one to one-and-a-half years from now is a reasonable time frame or not. But I think that's the sequence of hoped for events. That's the curve that we want to be on. Real quick, Elise?

**Elise Young, Bloomberg:** You're going to continue to press for borrowing and the amount you would seek is about \$9 billion?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Now the maximum is \$9 billion. I'm not sure exactly what the amount would be, but we want this tool in our tool belt, and when I say we, that ain't just me. This is on behalf of the 9 million of us who care about great public schools, police and fire services at all levels of the state, who care about pension payments getting made, etc. I hope the federal government comes through. I hope we have a recovery that looks like a V and we're back on our feet sooner than later. I'm hoping for the best, but I've got to prepare for the worst. That's my job. Thank you for that. Matt.

**Matt Arco, Star-Ledger:** Thanks, Governor. I'm curious if anything will be done to provide families more access to family members who are in nursing homes? And also whether Josh Gottheimer had alerted your office that he was getting requests for body bags five days ago related to Andover?

Also, President Trump is holding a press conference, as you mentioned, with governors later today to ask when they expect to reopen their states. What are you going to tell him? And if other states reopen this month or at the beginning of May, are you going to make any efforts to block those people from coming into New Jersey?

Real quick, EMS responders are on the front lines of this and some squads have discussed dropping service. Is the state considering compensating volunteers or doing more to protect them?

One last one for the Commissioner. Really just curious, how many daily tests are currently being administered? Do we have a handle on that? Not just daily numbers, or excuse me, results that are a few days behind, but daily tests? Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, I will defer to you in terms of more access. I think at one level we've hit this pretty hard, that we expect communication to be at a very high level. We asked after the Wanaque tragedy of a year ago October, we asked for emergency response plans that were delivered in February. We expect these operators to stick to those plans and do what they said they would do. But I'll leave it to you to add to that.

I don't know whether or not I've gotten any firsthand information of Josh Gottheimer asking for body bags. One of you may know that. He's been very helpful to us on this. He and I have been back and forth a lot today, including on the Andover situation. Is it a press conference with governors? Actually, I thought it was just a video call. Is the press part of that, do you know? Okay, I apologize. Yeah, we are. So we're having a video and I'll turn it over to the team after this. We are having a VTC. They normally happen on Mondays and Thursdays, a couple of Thursdays they haven't happened now, but this is a Thursday one. I think the President will be a part of that. Whether he's there or it's the Vice President, I will make some of the very points that I've made today, which is number one on the financial side. We need direct financial cash assistance from the federal government. Secondly, we look forward to, I mentioned this earlier, we've got to do what we've got to do in Jersey. We want to do that in a coordinated way regionally, and God knows we need the federal government.

It seems to me testing, scaled rapid testing is a particular area of partnership with the federal government and that's got to be predicated. It's got to be in place before we have any reasonable confidence that we can begin to open things back up again. Those are points that I'll reiterate, and I suspect other governors may as well. Judy, do you want to hit some of these, or Ed? Thank you.

**DOH Medical Director, Communicable Disease Service Dr. Ed Lifshitz:** As far as the number of tests that are done every day, we can get a close approximation, we don't have an exact number. The reason why we don't have an exact number is because while the large majority of labs reporting back tests, negative results as well as positive results, some tests that are sent out of state or to smaller places do not necessarily send that back. If I don't know the negatives, I can't tell you the exact number of tests that are done everywhere, which is also why when we put out our positivity, we report them out from our major labs, because those are the labs that we are comfortable are sending us both the negative and positive results.

With that being said, we're usually running somewhere between about 7,000 and 9,000 tests being performed a day.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Judy, anything on – thank you, Ed – on more access, EMS response or dropping services? Pat, you may want to weigh in on that.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** We are looking for and we had a call yesterday for more responders for EMT. We announced it at the press conference yesterday. I don't have what the response is, but we certainly can get that. I don't know, Pat, if you have anything.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Do you have a number, by the way?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Only from what we've gotten from the National Ambulance Contract, Matt, which is 175 total ambulance services that are now centralized out of MetLife Stadium.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Can you get to Matt as a follow up, the number of EMS/EMT folks who have raised their hand? Are you aware, either of you, on dropping of services?

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** I'm not, no.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Okay, you're good? Nikita.

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** Hi, Governor, I have a few census questions and then also something Andover from the Times. I'll start with my own. With the census operation suspended until June, a New Jersey SALT response rate at about the national average, are you concerned that New Jersey may not get a fair and thorough and accurate count of its population given the restrictions imposed on the state? Do you have more concerns about that in economically disadvantaged areas, given the federal funding that a lackluster account of New Jersey would get from the census?

And then given the expected four-month delay of census data that will impact legislative redistricting, the Trump administration has asked to extend the deadline to July 31, 2021. Do you believe it's even possible to conduct the June 21 Primary, and would you consider holding separate primaries for the gubernatorial and legislative races next year?

Separately, as the titular head of the Democratic Party, can you explain your understanding of the agreement between John Currie, LeRoy Jones and George Helmi, on the deal on the appointments to the Legislative Reapportionment Commission that was made to avoid a fight over State Democratic Chairman?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Was that the New York Times question? I can't believe that.

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** That was mine, don't worry. Here's the Times question. And, quote, "I was curious if the bodies found in Andover were the inappropriate incident that Commissioner Persichilli referenced during the Tuesday briefing. You had cited an early morning visit to a long-term care facility but declined to go into detail, citing privacy concerns. Was this the incident you were referring to? And if it was, how would reporting bodies being piled up like this qualify as a confidential matter?"

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Okay, I think you've already said it once earlier, but I'll allow you to come back. Some of these, I literally have given zero thought to, and I'll be very honest with you, as I always try to be. Yeah, as a census matter, we absolutely worry about getting our fair share, a fair count, and the fair resources in return for that. Whether delayed or not, it was a concern to begin with and it remains a concern. I don't know that our concern relative, and this is important, to other states has gapped out, stayed the same or shrunk on a relative basis. But as an absolute basis, getting an accurate and full count and getting our fair share as a result of that is a major focus and major concern, period.

I honestly don't have a crisp answer as to whether or not adding several months to this has heightened that concern or not. My gut tells me more time on the clock is probably not our friend in this case but that's a gut reaction. I've got no science to back that up. I've not given one second thought to next year's primaries, so I apologize for that. But the minute I do, I will promise you, you'll be the first person I speak to. I don't have any insights into the so-called deal. It's very simply, I believe that the date is at least November 15, Dan, if I'm not mistaken, or Parimal, in terms of when we need to appoint folks to a redistricting commission. I believe it's by November 15. We will abide by that. I've got no more color on that other than, that's the timeframe and that's always been the timeframe. If there's more of that, I'll come back to you. Judy, Andover. Thank you.

**Commissioner of Health Judith Persichilli:** Again, as we've said in the past, releasing more information about the particular nursing homes that are impacted, and the fact that this is the home of those residents, we have been reluctant to do that publicly, but to encourage and require the facilities to release their information. However, when something like Andover hits the papers, we do feel compelled to share as much information as we have, which we did today. As I sit here, I'm not checking my phone because I'm being rude, I'm checking my phone because we have reported the Andover situation to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, CMS, and they have discharged out-of-state surveyors. You know, we never release information on surveyors before they arrive at a facility. I just got notified that they have arrived at the facility. They will be doing full survey of Andover in relation to what we would consider immediate jeopardy complaints in the way they were storing deceased residents.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Very quick please.

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** I'm not sure that I heard, I think you might have given one but I'm not sure that I heard a clear answer on the possibility of a June primary in '21.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I said I haven't given it one second thought.

**Nikita Biryukov, New Jersey Globe:** Okay, all right. Thank you.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you. Commissioner Judy Persichilli, Dr. Ed. Lifshitz, thank you both and to your teams. Colonel Pat Callahan, to you and your extraordinary teams, Jared Maples, Parimal Garg, the rest of the squad. We will gather again tomorrow here at 1:00 p.m. If there's news between now and tomorrow, I've got a new mask I've got to put on here. If there's news between now and tomorrow we'll let you know. I

would just say to everybody, keep wearing your face coverings, stay at home, please. Stay away from each other. Together, we are winning. If we stay at it over the next period of time, we will win this and we will come out of this stronger than ever before.

To everybody, I want to actually conclude with one comment on Andover. I just want to make sure I repeat what I said earlier, and I think you join me. We are outraged by this. This is completely unacceptable. There's a reason why Judy's got her team, the feds from CMS are there, the Attorney General is looking at this. This is completely, utterly, not just outrageous, but unacceptable. Thank you, all.

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